#
10

A Dissertation

on

Colic

by

Isaac N. Buck

of

Virginia

Passed March 12th 1823

Colic

A disease of such frequent occurrence as Colic, it might be supposed was so perfectly understood, as to leave but little room for improvement in the practice. It will not be denied that the energetic employment of the remedies usually recommended will generally relieve it; yet cases sometimes occur in which the most prompt and judicious employment of the ordinary remedies have no effect in arresting the most painful disease.

Having observed the beneficial effect of Emetics in those intractable cases, and seeing but little notice taken of them by writers on the subject, (who if they notice them at all,) speak so lightly on the subject, that they rarely impress the student with the necessity of using them, particularly when he sees, that the most disagreeable symptoms of the disease, with which he has to contend is the rejection of the contents of the stomach, and sometimes even of the intestines by vomiting. For this reason I have selected this disease as the subject of my Dissertation, and, should it have the effect of awakening the attention of others to the subject, I shall have effected all that I expect.

In this essay I shall pursue the plan which has generally been observed by writers on the subject, and after detailing the practice taught by modern writers, shall relate that which has been employed in desperate cases in the County of Culpeper Virg.a (and particularly by my preceptor) with some cases in which it has been successfully used.

Colic is an appellation derived from Colon the name of one of the intestines, and has been indiscriminately applied to all pains of the abdomen. Cullen defines it "a painful distention spreading over the whole of the belly, and particularly, with a sense of twisting around the navel, often with a spasmodic contraction of the muscles, giving the appearance of a bag of round balls; it is usually attended with constipation and frequently vomiting." He divides it in his Nosology into seven species. But the division of professor Chapman, into three, is that which I prefer, and shall adopt. The three species into which he divides it, are Flatulent Colic, Bilious Colic and Colica Pictonum.

Flatulent Colic is occasioned says our professor "by indigestible aliment taken into the stomach, such as Cabbage &c. Cold

particularly when applied to the extremities is also assigned as a cause. When it proceeds from indigestion, it is attended by sickness of the stomach, vomiting, and spasmodic pains, it is unaccompanied by the chill which attends the commencement of Bilious Colic, and there is a rumbling noise in the intestines; which circumstances will serve to distinguish it. When it proceeds from indigestible aliment we are advised by the professor to promote the vomiting by giving warm drinks, so as to cleanse the stomach, if this should not have the effect, a mild Emetic may be given. From the efficacy of Tart. Emetic in cases of Bilious Colic which will hereafter be noticed, I should suppose it would be a safe and effectual remedy in this case. After evacuating the stomach sufficiently, he directs that carminatives and anodynes should be used to allay irritability, and subdue the pain. Spirits of Turpentine in doses of a teaspoonfull is said to afford great relief. Ether and Laudanum Cinnamon, and other aromatics are highly beneficial. When it proceeds from cold the direct application of heat should be made by means of hot bricks, and bottles filled with warm water &c. After allaying pain and irritability, the bowels should

be gently opened by Castor Oil or some other lenient purgative.

Bilious Colic comes on with pain in the abdomen particularly about the umbilical region, attended with chills, loss of appetite, nausea, and vomiting of bilious matter, bitter taste in the mouth, thirst, febrile heat and constipation. Bilious Colic is a disease of frequent occurrence in the U. States particularly in the Southern States. It occurs generally in Autumn, and is said by many to be a bilious fever turned in upon the bowels. It is produced by a redundance of bile, exposure to cold and moisture, long continued costiveness, derangement of the primae viae &c. This disease is to be distinguished from Enteritis by the spasmodic contraction of the abdominal muscles, and by the diminution of pain upon pressure, and the symptoms of inflamation being less violent. Dr. Chapman says the great pathognomic sign between this and other species of Colic is the occurrence of chills which always takes place in this disease.

When there is a remission of the pain, or a change from one situation to another, and is relieved by the employment of proper remedies, we have reason to expect a favourable termination;

but on the contrary when the pain continues fixed, increasing in violence, or suddenly ceases attended with cold sweats, or hickups, it is an unfavourable omen. When the disease proves fatal the usual appearances on dissection, are inflamation, distention and irregular contraction of some part of the intestinal tube.

The indications of cure in this disease are, to overcome the spasm of the intestinal tube, and to evacuate the alimentary canal. When there is high inflamation, which is generally the case in this disease, no practitioner would hesitate to employ Venesection until the inflamation was completely subdued. We are to be regulated in the employment of this remedy by the pulse and the effects produced. It will sometimes require a very liberal use of the lancet, to be productive of any great benefit. Doct. Chapman says he has seen the disease so far overcome by this remedy, as to be the cause of very little trouble to the practitioner. If there is great irritability of the stomach it has been recommended to quiet this by means of the effer-vescing draught with the addition of Laudanum, every two or three hours, but if nausea only prevails, we are to make use of Chamomile tea, Lime Water and milk, and anodyne injections.

Opium is said to have been beneficial, but objections are made to the employment of opium by the mouth on account of its liability to be rejected, but Doct. Chapman says he would advise it to be used in the form of an enema. The warm bath is very useful, and is said to act like a charm, producing a mitigation of all the violent symptoms. As an external application fomentations; as flannel cloths wrung out in a warm decoction of emollient herbs, a bladder filled with warm water or blisters may be applied to that part which is most painful. Our next object is to carry off the offending matter, which is to be done by glysters followed by purgatives. The glysters are to be employed to overcome the constipation which is generally attendant on this affection, for this purpose a great many substances have been recommended, as Tart. Emetic in the quantity of grs XX. or XXX. or even ʒj in ℥iij or ℥iv of water, it induces great relaxation. The Tobacco as an enema is also highly recommended in this disease, it may be used in two ways, either in the form of smoke or an infusion of the leaves. It should be used in the quantity of ʒj to a pint of water, inject half this quantity at a time; but so powerful are the effects of this narcotic that it

requires the greatest caution in its administration. By throwing three or four quart of water up the rectum violent constipation has been overcome. We next make use of purgatives, for this purpose the lenient ones are sometimes most useful; as the Lac Sulphuris, Castor Oil and Epsom Salts. But the most beneficial says Doct. Chapman is a combination of Calomel & Opium grs iij of Opium to grs XV of Calomel to be given every three or four hours. This combination operates in two ways; the Opium relaxes the spasm of the intestines, and the Calomel sweeps out the intestine and the disease yields. The last article generally recommended upon which we can place any reliance is Spts. Turpentine given by the mouth this has been successful when symptoms of mortification were present. Emetics as will hereafter be seen have been advantageously employed in this form of the disease.

The third form of Colic which I shall notice is that of Colica Pictonum. This disease is said to be of less frequent occurrence than formerly. It is characterized by a pain at the pit of the stomach extending downward to the intestines, particularly around the navel, accompanied with eructations, thirst, sickness, vomiting

of porraceous bile, constipation and an ineffectual desire to evacuate the bowels of their contents, and a tendency to paralysis of the extremities more particularly of the hands.

This disease was at one time supposed to be caused by the fumes arising from the decomposition of Lead alone; but it has since been found to proceed from many other causes as the use of unripe fruit, acid drinks, cold, long continued costiveness, irregularity in the mode of living, and an accumulation of bile. It is distinguished from Bilious Colic by the symptoms of inflamation being less violent, the pulse being quick and contracted. The situation of the pain and the bent position of the body, to which the patient gives a preference, and the tendency to paralysis will distinguish it from other complaints of the bowels.

The indications of cure are the same as in the other species of Colic viz. to relax the spasms of the intestines and excite their action by means of Cathartics, and to prevent inflamation. If the symptoms are violent threatening inflamation we should use the lancet freely, notwithstanding the depressed state of the pulse. The next thing to be done is to remove the

spasm, which is to be fulfilled by the use of water thrown upon the extremities, fomentations, and the plentiful use of Opium, which has been recommended from the idea of the disease being wholly spasmodic; but the combination of Opium and Calomel is to be prefered. The Vol. Tincture of Guaicum in the dose of a tablespoonfull, Castor Oil, Epsom Salts &c will answer very well for the purpose of evacuating the alimentary canal. If these should fail we must resort to anodyne and Tobacco injections, warm bath and the application of blisters to the abdomen. Allum is said to be very useful in the dose of grs XV every five or six hours. Much has been said of Mercury in this disease, of the efficacy of which we have the testimony of professor Chapman who says that great reliance is to be placed on this article, even to remove the paralysis of the extremities when they occur. The Mercury should be used until salivation is produced. The flannel roller has been recommended to prevent a predisposition to the disease. This constitutes the treatment usually employed in the several forms of Colic. I have before suggested the use of Emetics which have been frequently found to relieve hopeless cases of the

disease. The form of the disease to which they have been more particularly directed is that of Bilious Colic. So popular has this remedy become for the disease in the County of Culpeper, that it is almost as frequently resorted to as in Intermittent fever. The physicians usually commence the cure in the manner directed by authors, by means of bleeding, purges, injections &c. But when the disease fails to yield to those remedies, and the patient can retain nothing on his stomach, an Emetic of Tartarized Antimony is administered. The effects of this remedy are astonishing, it either removes or greatly diminishes the pain, leaves the stomach much less irritable, and in some instances, evacuations from the bowels have taken place without further aid. But generally injections have been administered so soon as the operation of the emetic is over, which rarely fails to induce copious evacuations from the bowels. The bowels are afterwards kept open by Castor Oil or some other gentle laxative, which completes the cure &c.

Deleterious as the use of Lead appears to be when continued for a considerable time, it is remarkable that very large doses of the Acetate may be taken without any bad consequences. Doct. Chapman says he has never known injury to result in

principally of nutritious broths, I ordered frictions to the abdomen under which treatment she rapidly recovered.

Joseph Pithian

½ Case I was called to S. J— a few weeks after parturition, I found her labouring under what she called a fretted leg, she stated that a short time after she had been confined she was attacked with pain in the abdomen, extending through the loins, with a sense of weight and frequent inclination to go to stool, at which time she had a discharge of a thin fetid fluid; but that it gave her no relief; at this time her pulse was irritable frequent and weak, and her appetite much impaired; as

there was no relief from the dis=
=charges, I thought it proceeded from
impacted feces in the large intestine
and ordered a dose of Ol Ricini whi=
=ch was to be repeated untill it shou=
=ld operate; it did not till after sev=
=eral doses had been given; then a
large mass of hard feces which
smelt very bad was discharged she
said that they smelt so bad that
it caused her to faint; after this
discharge she soon recovered

Jos Parrish

3rd Case I was called to see D. Y—
a little boy in the family of Capt
Oconnors he complained of great
pain in his bowels with frequent
inclination to go to stool and wo=
=uld strain violently when on the
chair; he had a thin liquid

his practice, though he has used it in large quantities. I have it from respectable authority, that during the last war while the army was in winter quarters at French Mills & Plattsburg many of the officers and soldiers were affected with diseases of the bowels. An army surgeon resorted to the use of pills of Opium and Acetate of Lead in all cases of Dysenteria Cruenta. His practice was crowned with success in many obstinate cases. He became so pleased with the remedy, that he issued it out by boxes full without restricting his patients as to the time of continuing it. He administered it amongst others to Colo. J and Maj. B. two of the most promising officers of their grade in the army; they were much pleased with the first effects of the remedy. He then gave each of them a box of the pills, to carry in their pockets, to be used whenever they might be threatened with a return of the disease. Unfortunately they had occasion to use it too long, and became affected with all those dreadful symptoms of which the Lead is productive, Excruciating pains in the bowels, paralysis, ulcers &c. Those symptoms carried one of them at least, (and I think my informant said both) to the grave regretted by the whole army. These cases while they point

to the importance of Lead, admonish us against continuing the use of it for any considerable time.

The following are cases in which Emetics have been employed in Colic.

1st. On the 3rd of September a strong healthy negro woman belonging to Mr. R. N. of Culpeper while walking a certain distance from home, was so violently attacked with Colic as to render it necessary to carry her home in a gig. My preceptor was called in, he found her rolling and tossing herself about and crying aloud with pain, and vomiting every thing up that was given her to drink. The pulse was not remarkably altered from that of health. On feeling the abdomen, the integuments appeared quite flaccid, and the intestines could be distinctly felt twisting and turning about in the most violent manner. Her arm was tied up, and ℞ or 18 ℥ of blood taken, afterwards 50 gtts of Laudanum were administered. The pain and commotion of the bowels were somewhat abated for a short time, but in an hour returned almost as violently as ever. An injection containing Castor oil was then prepared

and 60 gtts of Tinct. Opii added to it, it was retained for a short time, and then came away without faeces. The injections were repeated several times, omitting the Tinct. Opii; without inducing any faecal discharge. The stomach being somewhat quieted a large dose of Castor Oil was administered. There was a good deal of retching after taking it, but it was believed that the oil was retained. She was left in the care of the family for the night, with directions to administer an Enema if the medicine should not operate in three hours, and administer an infusion of Senna and Cream of Tartar as the circumstances of the case required. Next morning 4th she was still unrelieved, the injection and ℥XXIV of strong infusion of Senna had been administered, the attendants believed that there was a partial discharge of faeces sometime in the night. She was then put into the warm bath, and an enema composed of the infusion of Senna and Castor Oil administered, without affording relief. Pills composed of Calomel Grs X and Opium Gr I were directed to be given every two hours. Four of the pills were taken without effect. It was then determined to resort to an Emetic. Grs IV of Tart. Emetic dissolved in an ounce of warm water were given. The medicine

was retained 10 or 15 minutes, then operated severely four or five times. After this the patient seemed somewhat easier. An enema of Castor Oil was then administered, which operated copiously, and greatly relieved the pain. Next day 5th The patient was tolerably easy some little soreness about the abdomen, Castor oil was ordered. 6th The patient was much better, bowels sufficiently open. Attention to the state of the bowels and diet were directed, after which there was no necessity for visiting her.

2nd A negro woman belonging to Mr. B, was attacked some time in the month of October with Colic, a physician of Fairfax was called to see her, who used a variety of the usual remedies. After attending her two days, he was prevented from visiting her as soon as the family wished, and her case appearing more alarming, another physician was called in, he immediately administered an Emetic, about the time of the operation, the other physician arrived, after hearing what had been given, he exclaimed! An Emetic! The patient will never survive it. It is undoing all that I have been doing, having never been able to make a Cathartic stick till today. The Doct. had soon the mortification of witnessing a

change directly the reverse of that which he had predicted. Soon after the operation of the Emetic, discharges per ano came on, (I think I was informed without the assistance of any thing else) but of this I can't speak positively, from which time the patient's recovery was progressive.

3rd On the 18th of December my preceptor was requested to visit Capt. J. M. (a respectable farmer near the mountains in Culpeper) in consultation with Doct. Fletcher, the attending physician. We found him in all the agonies of a most violent Bilious Colic; with a countenance almost Hippocratic and vomiting incessantly. The attending physician states that he had been attacked eight days previously, and that he had done every thing he could think of applicable to his case. Bleeding, purgatives, Enemata, opiates, warm bath, blisters &c. had each been employed without ~~affording~~ more than temporary relief; no discharge of faeces since he had visited him. He had last been taking pills of Calomel and Opium. The effects of emetics in other cases of the kind were explained, and proposed to him. He readily consented to their use, observing that he had to acknowledge that he had

been more unsuccessful in curing Bilious Colic than almost any disease he had to contend with in his neighbourhood, and if it should succeed in as hopeless a case as the present he would never doubt of its efficacy in any case of the kind. Five grains of Tart. Emetic were then made into two pills with the crumb of bread, and given to him. The pills were retained long enough to produce the wished for effect, on the stomach &c. Much bile was thrown up, a copious perspiration ensued, and he became much easier. About an hour after the emetic, a dometic injection, similar to some which had previously been used was administered. It was retained so long that those present began to despair of its operating, but as he seemed quiet, it was thought best not to disturb him. The physicians retired to an adjacent room, where they had not remained long, before they were apaile by an odour which could not be mistaken, the patient had a copious evacuation, and several others followed in the course of the night. Next morning he was greatly relieved, had slept much and had some inclination to eat. He was however extremely debilitated; it was therefore agreed to nourish him by animal soups &c. and not give him anything unless the pain should

become more violent, until the next day, when Castor oil should be given if requisite. His strength improved daily and an occasional laxative soon restored him to perfect health. Doct. F. was delighted with the effects of the emetic in this case and expressed a determination to employ the practice in other cases of Colic, I have not yet been informed of the result.

Other cases could be adduced, but these are deemed sufficient to establish the claim of the remedy to the attention of practition=ers. What the effects of emetics would be in cases of Colica Pictonum I am not prepared to say having never seen a case.

I shall leave it for others (who are more capable to explain the peculiar manner in which emetics act, in affording such imme=diate relief,) and shall content myself with observing that no more occurs in this case than is frequently witnessed, in bilious fevers attended with vomiting, dysentery &c. where those excessive actions of the stomach and bowels are relieved by the use of emetics and cathartics, thereby contradicting the doctrine of the ingenious John Brown who so much ridiculed the idea of curing vomiting by vomiting, purging by purging, bleeding by bleeding &c. Exalted as his genius was, he has not been able to change a practice

which experience has proven so efficacious. While I claim the attention of the illustrious professors of this institution, for the many errors which they may discover in this juvenile production. I beg leave to express to them my gratitude for the indefatigable zeal which they have evinced in setting forth the correct principles of the several branches which they profess. Long may they continue in the successful discharge of those important duties.